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UNIVERSAL RATIFICATION

IMPROVING THE OPERATION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

SERVICING OF THE TREATY BODIES

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Report of the Secretariat

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adequate training by technically and pedagogically competent instructors to a wide range of interested parties at the national level. Recipients of such training should include all government departments involved in the implementation of treaties, the judiciary, the police, and civil society. They recommended that an inventory of all training programmes in this area be conducted, not only of those programmes organized by OHCHR but also all the relevant programmes of other international bodies. The chairpersons recommended that OHCHR coordinate with those bodies to maximize the effectiveness of the training provided and explore the possible use of electronic means in providing target audiences with training materials and information.

8. Training is an important component of the technical cooperation activities of OHCHR, many of which already operate at the national level. Table 1 below lists the major areas in which methodological and pedagogical tools have been developed in the framework of technical cooperation and in which training projects can be implemented upon the request of Governments.

9. Almost all technical cooperation projects in human rights training are targeted at specific audiences and take place at the national level, including training on reporting under the human rights treaties. The General Assembly, in resolution 926 (X) of 14 December 1955, stipulated that technical assistance is to be provided in subjects for which adequate advisory assistance is not available through a specialized agency and which does not fall within the scope of existing technical assistance programmes. Consequently, prior to the commencement of a technical cooperation project or programme in a specific country, all United Nations bodies active in that country are consulted to avoid duplication of efforts, to coordinate contributions to the project and to maximize its effectiveness. Information on OHCHR''s training activities at the global, regional or national level may be obtained from the most recent report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Human Rights on advisory services in the field of human rights (E/CN.4/1998/92).

10. An inventory of United Nations technical assistance programmes, as requested by the chairpersons, is being prepared by OHCHR and is due to be completed by the end of the year.

Table 1. Major areas of training conducted under the technical cooperation programme of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Subject	Item	Target audience	Status	Focus of training
Conflict resolution	Manual on human rights, minorities and conflict management	All groups in civil society with an interest in conflict resolution (in the past, there has been participation from representatives of NGOs, labour unions, minority groups, women's groups, national institutions (based on the Paris principles, such as the office of an ombudsperson), legal profession, etc.)	Full draft pending review	National
Elections	Handbook on human rights and elections	Electoral staff and monitors, NGOs	Published	National
	Checklist for electoral monitoring and assistance		Available	National
Fellowship programme (focused in recent years on human rights reporting)	Fellowship programme	National candidates	Annual programme	Global/ regional
Legal profession	Training package on human rights	Judges, lawyers and prosecutors	Advanced draft of manual under review	National
Mass media	Training package on human rights and the mass media	Journalists and broadcasters	First draft of manual under review	National
Military	Training package on human rights, humanitarian law and the military	Military trainers and commanders	To be developed	Global/ regional/ national
National human rights commissions and ombuds offices	Handbook on national human rights institutions	Members and staff of national human rights commissions and ombudspersons	Published	National

Subject	Item	Target audience	Status	Focus of training
Non-governmental organizations	Training package for national and local NGOs	Representatives of human rights NGOs	Under formulation	National
Parliaments	Training package on human rights and parliament	Members of parliamentary human rights committees, other interested parliamentarians and parliament secretariats	To be developed	National
Police	Training manual for police	Police trainers and commanders	Manual and pocketbook of standards published Advanced draft of trainers guide under review	Global/ national
Pretrial detention	Handbook on human rights and pretrial detention	Police and legal professionals involved in the process of pretrial detention	Published	National
Prisons	Training package	Prison administrators and their trainers	Advanced draft of manual under review	Regional/ national
Social workers	Manual on human rights and social work	Social workers	Published	National
Teachers	Training package	Primary and secondary school teachers, curriculum developers	Under formulation	National
Training methodology	Human rights trainers guide	Human rights trainers from institutions or professions relevant to human rights questions (Government, legal profession, NGOs, etc.)	Draft available	National
Treaty reporting	Training package	Government officials responsible for reporting	Manual and trainers guide published	National

B. Translation and publication of the revised Manual on Human Rights Reporting

11. The chairpersons requested that translation and publication of the revised Manual in languages other than English be expedited and recommended that it be made available on the OHCHR Website.

12. The translation of the revised Manual into Spanish will be available by November 1998. (The pocket guide to the international human rights instruments is already available in Spanish.) While the revised Manual has been translated into Russian, editing and printing have been deferred due to a lack of funds. In addition, since the Manual is a sales publication, with legal and financial implications that would first need to be resolved, no decision has yet been reached on the possibility of its publication on the Internet.

C. Provision of human rights training to United Nations personnel in the field

13. Reiterating their view of the importance of providing human rights training to all United Nations personnel in the field, the chairpersons encouraged the High Commissioner for Human Rights to provide, as soon as possible, a basic human rights training package for personnel throughout the United Nations system.

14. Training programmes are conducted regularly by OHCHR for United Nations peacekeeping officials, election monitors and human rights observers. Manuals, guides and other methodological tools are being developed for human rights special rapporteurs and personnel in technical cooperation projects. Workshops are conducted through the United Nations Staff College Project in Turin, Italy. Further information on the training of field personnel is also contained in the report of the Secretary-General on advisory services in the field of human rights.

15. Through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), human rights training is being envisioned for all United Nations development personnel. A training programme is being developed by the United Nations Development Group, with the active collaboration of OHCHR. In addition, in implementation of OHCHR's memorandum of understanding with UNDP, a human rights training module is in preparation which will be used for UNDP personnel to be incorporated into their regular training programmes.

III. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

16. The chairpersons emphasized the important role that the OHCHR Website (www.unhchr.ch) can play in making treaty body materials accessible to a wide range of governmental, expert and scholarly audiences, as well as to the public at large. They urged the High Commissioner to attach high priority to the continuing development of this resource and expressed the hope that the additional funding that would be required would be made available.

17. Despite resource constraints, OHCHR has made considerable efforts to expand and improve its website. A year after the launch of its English version on 10 December 1996, limited versions of the website in French and Spanish were launched containing factual information - in contrast to full-text documents - in these languages. In the context of a survey carried out during the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights to evaluate and further enhance the website and in follow-up to the chairpersons' recommendation, a "Charter-based bodies database" and a "News database" have been created and linked to the website to ensure timely access to documents of the Charter-based bodies and to human rights press releases and statements. Continuous improvements are also being made to the "Treaty bodies database" to facilitate both usage and data entry.

18. Additionally, a database is being developed on Lotus Notes to deal with communications received under the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. A prototype was developed in early 1998 and is being examined within the relevant technical and substantive units in OHCHR. Upon completion of that phase, the improved prototype will undergo testing by a larger sample of users later in the year. It is expected to be ready for downloading of information and documents by early 1999 and to be linked to the website later in the year.

19. An effort is also being made to provide users with the opportunity to search through all database information linked to the website with a single search mechanism using such common categories as countries, human rights subjects and mandates, and languages. Making the website more user-friendly, enhancing information management, coordinating and maximizing the efficiency of information exchange remain among the key goals of the Office.

IV. SERVICING OF THE TREATY BODIES

20. Expressing concern at what they considered to be a generally inadequate staffing situation, the chairpersons considered that an increase in the number of staff available to service all aspects of their activities was indispensable. They requested, inter alia, an estimate of the amount of Professional staff time required on average to process each communication and an estimate of the number of staff required to eliminate the backlog in communications and to ensure the steady, timely and expert processing of anticipated levels of communications in the future.

21. In view of the above, a detailed estimate of the amount of Professional staff time required to service the treaty bodies has been prepared in relation to (a) the reporting process; (b) the processing of communications; (c) tasks that must be undertaken on an annual basis; and (d) other tasks not easily quantified; this information is presented in table 2. The Professional staff time required for servicing of the meetings of chairpersons is presented in table 3 and that associated with the backlog of communications before the Human Rights Committee is presented in table 4.

Table 2. Time required for professional activities related to reporting to the treaty bodies

	CRC	CAT	CERD	CCPR	CESCR
A. Reporting process (per State report)	(20 reports/ yr)	(16 reports/ yr)	(30 reports/ yr)	(15 reports/ yr)	(11 reports/ yr)
1. Country files	10 days/file	3 days/file	5 days/file	0.5 days/file	15 days/file
2. Country analyses	16 days/ analysis	-	-	4 days/ analysis	4 days/ analysis
3. Lists of issues	1 day/list	-	-	6 days/list	6 days/list
4. Updating files and analyses	0.5 day	-	1 day	3 days	6 days
5. Concluding observations	4 days	1 day	4 days	4 days	4 days
6. Subtotal per State report	31.5 days	4 days	10 days	17.5 days	35 days
7. Total workdays required to deal with the reporting process	630 days	64 days	300 days	262.5 days	385 days
8. Full-time staff required	2.9	0.3	1.4	1.2	1.8
B. Communications					
1. Number of correspondence received per year	N/A	approx. 100	approx. 6	approx. 1 500	N/A
2. Correspondence logged, reviewed, responses prepared and sent	-	20 days (100 correspondance at 5/day)	1.1 days (6 correspondance at 5/day)	300 days (1 500 correspondance at 5/day)	-
3. Number of new cases received per year (approximate percentage of correspondence that eventually develops into cases)	-	50 cases per year (50%)	3 cases per year (50%)	150 cases per year (10%)	-
4. Summary of cases for Committee sessions	-	75 days (at 1.5 days/ summary)	4.5 days (at 1.5 days/ summary)	375 days (at 2.5 days/ summary)	-

	CRC	CAT	CERD	CCPR	CESCR
5. Preparation of draft decisions for Committee sessions	-	150 days (50 drafts at 3 days/draft)	9 days (3 drafts at 3 days/draft)	360 days (120 drafts a/ at 3 days/draft)	-
6. Preparation of pre-sessional documents b/	-	10 days/yr	-	46 days/yr	-
7. Duration of session	-	20 days/yr	-	60 days/yr (including Working Group on Communications)	-
8. Total workdays required to deal with communications (sum of lines (B) 2 and (B) 4-7)	-	325 days	14.6 days	1 141 days	-
9. Full-time staff required	-	1.5	0.1	5.2	-
C. Annual activities (preparation of sessions and documentation)					
1. Duration of sessions and pre-sessional working groups	60 days/yr	20 days/yr	30 days/yr	60 days/yr	40 days/yr
2. Preparation of agenda and drafting of statements, misc. background papers, etc.	10 days/yr	5 days/yr	10 days/yr	18 days/yr	10 days/yr
3. Organization of sessions, pre-sessional working groups, days of general discussion, NGO briefings, etc.	60 days/yr	20 days/yr	20 days/yr	20 days/yr	20 days/yr
4. Processing of State reports	10 days/yr	10 days/yr	15 day[illegible]yr	10 days/yr	10 days/yr
5. Preparation of annual report	26 days/yr (3 sessional and 1 biannual report)	20 days/yr	20 days/yr	40 days/yr	20 days/yr

	CRC	CAT	CERD	CCPR	CESCR
6. Preparation of meetings of States parties	12 days/yr	10 days/yr	10 days/yr	3 days/yr	3 days/yr
7. Total workdays required per year to deal with annual activities	168 days	85 days	105 days	151 days	103 days
8. Full-time staff required	0.8	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.5
D. Other treaty-related activities (additional 20% to A+B+C, (See para. 22)	160 days	268 days (70 (20%) + 198 (art. 20 inquiries, see para. 22))	84 days	264 days	98 days
1. Full-time staff required	0.7	1.2	0.4	1.2	0.4
E. Total workdays required per year to service the treaty bodies	958 days	617 days	506 days	1 818.5 days	586 days
Total number of full-time staff required to service the treaty bodies ((A+B+C+D)/220 days)	4.4	3.4	2.5	8.3	2.7

a/ Despite receiving 150 new cases per year (line 3), time constraints restrict the ability of the Human Rights Committee to adopt decisions on more than a maximum of 120 cases per year at its three annual sessions.

b/ Including lists of summaries, lists of cases registered between sessions, summary checklists, communications and follow-up chapters in the annual reports and updates on follow-up to replies.

Table 3. Time required for professional activities related to servicing the meeting of chairpersons

1.	Organization of meeting	5 days
2.	Preparation of pre-sessional documents, including reporting on follow-up to previous meetings	10 days
3.	Preparation of in-sessional documents	6 days
4.	Conduct of follow-up to meetings, including liaison with other units of the Secretariat and other parts of the United Nations system	110 days
5.	Total Professional workdays	131 days
6.	Total Professional staff members required	0.6 staff

22. Section (D) of table 2 refers to responsibilities that are not easily amenable to quantification, such as contacts with other services, oral and written inquiries and requests for documentation from treaty body experts, Governments, non-governmental organizations and other interested groups or individuals, attendance at related meetings, contributions to outside studies or meetings and the administration of the existing Plans of Action under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Such activities are estimated to require at least an additional 20 per cent of Professional staff time. In the same section, consideration is given to the possibility of the Committee against Torture undertaking a confidential inquiry under article 20 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. This is an irregular activity of the Committee but recently work under this procedure has been undertaken each year, including the analysis of allegations, preparation of progress reports, correspondence with the concerned Governments, institutions and Committee members, as well as organization and participation in inquiry missions. Each inquiry comprising the above activities is estimated at 198 Professional workdays.

23. With respect to communications, section (B) of table 2, the amount of Professional staff time necessary to perform each task in the life of a communication is estimated at 6.5 days for communications before the Committee against Torture, 4.9 days for communications before the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and 9.5 days for those before the Human Rights Committee (line (B)8 divided by the number of cases dealt with per year (line (B)5)). This translates into a need for 6.8 full-time staff members to deal solely with communications for the treaty bodies.

24. It may be noted that the Human Rights Committee, even when working at full capacity with adequate secretariat, normally cannot deal with all the communications received under the Optional Protocol each year and therefore accumulates unattended correspondence regardless of the level of secretariat servicing. In recent years, however, due to this natural accumulation and to the fact that it has not worked with an optimal level of secretariat servicing for communications, the Committee has accumulated a backlog of over 1,000 pieces of unattended correspondence. According to table 4, approximately 4 staff members would be needed to work for one year in order to clear the backlog, based on the pace of work presented in table 2.

Table 4. Backlog of communications before the Human Rights Committee

1.	Number of unattended correspondence	approx. 1 040 correspondence
2.	Time needed to log, review, prepare and send responses	208 days (1 040 correspondence at 5/day)
3.	Number of new cases resulting from the unattended correspondence (approx. percentage of correspondence that eventually develops into cases)	104 cases per year (10%)
4.	Summary of cases for Committee sessions	260 days (at 2.5 days/summary)
5.	Preparation of draft decisions for Committee sessions	312 days (104 drafts at 3 days/draft)
6.	Preparation of pre-sessional documents a/	40 days/yr
7.	Duration of session	52 days/yr (including Working Group on Communications)
8.	Total workdays required to deal with communications (sum of lines 2, 4-7)	872 days
9.	Full-time staff required to fully clear the backlog	4

a/ Including lists of summaries, lists of cases registered between sessions, summary checklists, communications and follow-up chapters in the annual reports and updates on follow-up to replies.

25. The Committee against Torture and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination do not currently have a backlog. However, the number of communications being submitted to the Committee against Torture has risen 13-fold from 1993 to 1997 and, at the current pace of submissions, it is expected to increase again in 1998 by 14 per cent over the previous year. Consequently, it is expected that two full-time Professionals will be required to deal with communications for this treaty body by 1999.

26. In view of the foregoing, approximately 22 Professional full-time staff members would be required to assist the treaty bodies and service the meetings of chairpersons (sum of totals on table 2, line (E.1) and table 3, line 3). An additional half-time position would be required to deal with the expected increase in communications to the Committee against Torture by the year 1999 and to fully clear the backlog of communications before the Human Rights Committee as it currently stands, another four staff members would need to be hired for a one-year period. 2/ Thus, a total of 26 full-time and 1 half-time staff members would be required in 1999 to perform all the above tasks; thereafter 22 full-time and 1 half-time staff members could maintain the regular pace of work.

27. There are currently a total of 12 Professional staff positions in the two treaty implementation teams in OHCHR assigned to the regular servicing of the treaty bodies. 3/ The responsibilities attached to the positions of the leaders of the two treaty implementation teams are not included among these because, although they include considerable substantive duties, they are to a

large extent managerial in nature. One additional post also not included among the 12 is filled by a Junior Professional Officer working exclusively on clearing the backlog of communications.

28. Other activities not directly related to the servicing of treaty bodies (and therefore not included in the present table), such as follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights, participation in training programmes and briefings for government delegations and non-governmental organizations and other inter-Branch activities (i.e. gender issues, Executive Committees, inter-agency cooperation, contributions to publications and development or improvement of databases) are not included in the estimates.

29. The financial stringency faced by the United Nations has not permitted the number of Professional staff posts to keep pace with the increased workload posed by the human rights treaty system. Strengthening of the servicing provided for the treaty bodies is urgently needed. This was recognized by the chairpersons at their ninth meeting when they called upon the High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop a Global Plan of Action to strengthen the support provided to the treaty bodies. A draft Global Plan of Action has been developed in consultation with the chairperson of that meeting (see HRI/MC/1998/Misc.1). While the Plan will not compensate for the shortage of regular staff posts, it may alleviate the most pressing needs of the treaty bodies until such time as regular budget posts can be established.

Notes

1/ Information on other matters raised during those meetings requiring follow-up is contained in separate documents as follows: the draft global plan of action for the treaty bodies (HRI/MC/1998/Misc.1), information on the possibility of treaty bodies examining reports of small developing States by video-conference links (HRI/MC/1998/Misc.2), the possibility of treaty bodies holding sessions in regions other than their normal base (HRI/MC/1998/Misc.3), and the criteria used within the United Nations system to define small States (HRI/MC/1998/Misc.4).

2/ The Human Rights Committee would also need additional meeting time to adopt views on these cases.

3/ This figure includes one vacant post and the post of one Junior Professional Officer. It does not include staff on the support team under the Plan of Action for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.